



Media Release
Transport Minister Fikile Mbalula launches Operation Vala Zonke to fix South Africa's potholes



Johannesburg, 8 August 2022 – Transport Minister Fikile Mbalula launched a national campaign to fix potholes on South African roads on Monday, and appealed to provinces, municipalities, the private sector and the public to get behind the campaign, which will be known as Operation Vala Zonke in Nguni or Operation Kwala Kaofela in Sesotho.

The campaign to fix potholes, which was launched on the R57 in the Emfuleni Local Municipality south of Johannesburg, will be led by the South African National Roads Agency SOC Limited (SANRAL), as an agency of the National Department of Transport. SANRAL will be working closely with provincial and municipal roads departments.

“This is an important campaign that will make a huge difference in the lives of many South Africans. It will change the face of our municipal and provincial roads from pothole-riddled to an acceptable state of repair. This launch will be replicated across the country with Premiers and MECs leading Provincial launches in all nine provinces,” said Minister Mbalula.

“This is not just a project to make people feel nice, but it is about real implementation. We are changing the way government does things. We are going beyond the big launches and getting things done.”

Minister Mbalula said President Cyril Ramaphosa would be visiting Emfuleni on Friday, 12 August, for a Presidential Imbizo, and it was important for people to feel the impact of projects making a difference in their lives, such as the pothole repair campaign.

“All the potholes across South Africa will need to be closed and there is a lot of work to be done in this regard by SANRAL in conjunction with the MECs and Mayors throughout the country.

Minister Mbalula said the reality of potholes hit home for him when he undertook an inspection of the N12 national road in Wolmaransstad in the North-West earlier this year, as a follow-up on that province’s Presidential Imbizo held in March.

“This is the reality of many communities in all our provinces. The bad roads, caused mainly by potholes, are one of the major hindrances to economic growth.”

He also said service delivery was often hampered by corruption. “Corruption not only eats into the social fibre of our society, but it also impacts on the integrity of the work that government does to deliver services to our people. Often, the money is spent and the work is not done, but some civil servant or politician has become rich. To prevent corruption, Operation Vala Zonke must contain consequence management measures. Where there is corruption, it must be dealt with decisively.”

Minister Mbalula said the national policy on road infrastructure was anchored in the National Development Plan “which enjoins us to invest in a strong network of economic infrastructure designed to support the country’s medium- and long-term objectives if we are to achieve sustainable and inclusive growth by 2030. Achieving this vision requires targeted development of transport, as one of the sectors that makes up the network industries”.

Government’s infrastructure development plan is an important building block in revitalising South Africa’s economy and job creation, he said.

“This will, in turn, exponentially improve our efforts to ensure sustainable livelihoods for many of our people.

“Addressing the maintenance challenges and backlog in our road network starts with putting in place measures that will halt the deterioration of our roads. Attending to potholes as soon as possible after they occur is the most effective way to arrest this decline.”

The majority of potholes, he said, are found on municipal and provincial roads.

“In the main, our national roads remain pothole free, largely because of SANRAL’s proactive approach to fixing potholes. SANRAL has a policy of fixing any reported potholes within 48 hours. While national roads are overwhelmingly in a pristine condition, we recognise that provincial and municipal roads require a decisive strategy and active support to augment capacity gaps.

“Potholes remain a problem and pose a danger to road users throughout the country. Potholes are particularly dangerous at night or in rainy weather.

“Having said that, it does not give a justification for a drunk or dangerous drivers to blame potholes. We continue to appeal to motorists to drive safely on our roads, irrespective of whether there are potholes or not, and we will continue and do better to design and build our roads in a way that is most safe for all road users.”

He said that complaints about potholes dominate social media and are a major contributor to negative sentiment towards the government and the country.

“We are proud to announce that, as part of this campaign, we are launching a pothole reporting App, which the public will be able to use to report any potholes they might encounter.

“The App will work in conjunction with the SANRAL pothole management App and will allow the public to raise any issues, upload pictures of potholes, provide real-time

location of the road on an interactive map that will show the owners of the different roads. The app will also provide status updates on issues raised using a pothole ticketing system.

“The information then gets assigned to the relevant authority, depending on where the road is, and the maintenance depot responsible for that road attends to fixing the pothole,” said Minister Mbalula.

The SANRAL Pothole App is immediately available on the App Store for Apple devices and it will be available to Android users within the next few days.

“Over the next six months we will closely monitor and assess the impact of the interventions. A monitoring and evaluation capability has been put in place. This will enable SANRAL to generate audit reports, which will form the basis for validation of the work undertaken and the turn-around time in attending to potholes. Through this intervention, we are raising the bar on service delivery by ensuring that the voice of the citizen is heard.”

Mbalula singled out the role of the media in shining a light on government’s activities. “I am very proud of the work that the media does to ensure we deliver proper services. On behalf of society, you are holding us accountable with regards to service delivery.” He said it was critically important to involve the private sector in the pothole repair campaign.

“As part of our stakeholder engagements, we will reach out to private companies, communities and other stakeholders to play their part in supporting government efforts to preserve and improve our road infrastructure.

“Through partnerships with institutions of learning and the sectoral education and training authorities, we will infuse a strong skills development methodology to the intervention. A skills revolution must become a pillar of this intervention at all levels of government,” said Minister Mbalula.

Caption: Transport Minister Fikile Mbalula at the launch of the Operation Vala Zonke campaign. Working together with SANRAL and other spheres of government, the private sector and civil society, the programme will eradicate potholes on the country’s roads.

Issued on behalf of SANRAL by FTI Consulting. For editorial content or additional information, contact: pressoffice@nra.co.za